DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 176 304 CS 205 146

AUTHOR Gebhard, Ann O.
TITLE The Impact of Bilingual/Bicultural Education on English Education.
PUB DATE Mar 79
NOTE 11p.; Paper presented at the combined Annual Meeting of the Conference on English Education and the Secondary School English Conference (Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, March 15-18, 1979)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Biculturalism; *Bilingual Education; *Cultural Awareness; *English (Second Language); *English Instruction; Multicultural Education; *Nonstandard Dialects; Professional Associations; Reading Instruction; Teacher Attitudes; Teaching Methods

ABSTRACT

The impact of bilingual/bicultural instruction on English education could be a lessening of low success, undifferentiated teaching. The demand for accommodation of cultural pluralism in the classroom could result in training practices and attitudinal growth that will produce the kind of positive individualization in school practice that will benefit all children. Federally inspired bilingual/bicultural mandates prompt state certification requirements that will introduce linguistically trained and sensitive personnel into the nation's schools. The social reality of classrooms in the United States indicates that many English teachers are or should be teachers of English as a second language/dialect. Professional organizations such as the National Council of Teachers of English have historically supported the recognition of linguistic diversity in the classroom. Teaching English as a second language strategies that can be useful include: an eclectic approach to grammar teaching, insights into the role of syntax in comprehension, controlled composition techniques for writing, and attitudinal changes brought by an understanding of the culture of the child. (MKM)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Ann O. Gebhard
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

ED176304

The Impact of Bilingual/Bicultural Education on English Education

Ann O. Gebhard

The intellectual and political ferment of the 1960's that launched "the Great Society" saw the beginning of educational programs on the federal level that have considerable contemporary impact - among them the 1968 Bilingual Education Program. Today I would like to trace what I see to be the consequence of that program for English teachers and English education.

The sixties was a decade marked by a turning away in official government policy from the demand for intellectual rigor in school programs - a demand in large part created by the xenophobia that followed the 1958 launching of the first Russian sputnik - and a turning toward a more socially concious view of educational priorities - a view nurtured at least in part of the fires of Watts. One of the foremost weapons in President Johnson's war on poverty was the 1965 Elementary and Secondary Education Act - an act frequently amended that provides various "title" programs. A 1968 amendment, Title VII, created the Bilingual Education Program. Officially, this amendment is an endorsement on the national level of a pluralistic language policy. Millions of federal dollars (in 1977 $118 million) were provided to implement instruction for non-native speakers; subsequently funds were provided for the training of teachers to staff such programs - creating teacher training programs in TESOL and Bilingual Education.

How do Bilingual/Bicultural programs affect English education? Foremost, it seems to me, is that these programs provide a rich cultural perspective from which to view the teaching of standard English. Official government policy, in essence, endorses linguistic and, at least to a limited extent, cultural pluralism.

CS205146

It might be helpful here to stop for definitions-

Bilingual Education is directed toward the instruction of non-native speakers. It involves at least partial instruction in the child's native language. In some programs the child may only be taught to read in his own language; in others, native language instruction in at least some subjects will continue through high school. The largest group of non-native speakers in American schools are Spanish. Depending upon locality, other groups - Chinese, French, Italian, and Vietnamese, American Indian - also provide substantial non-English school populations. Bicultural education is a broader entity embracing,as well as non-native speakers, the instruction of those who may be native speakers of a variant dialect - such as Black or southern Appalachian groups.

TESOL addresses the needs of both groups, since its methodology is used in all transitional bilingual programs as well as used in teaching dialect speakers standard English.

It is instructive in regard to these programs to look at the work of the National Council. In an Examination of the Attitudes of the NCTE Toward Language, Raven McDavid and his colleagues chart what I see as the progress of the organization from a theoretical stance emphasizing Anglo-conformity through "Melting Pot" - vision of English Education toward acknowledgment of Cultural Pluralism. In the long view of history I think that it is interesting to contemplate that our own profession represents the triumph of a liberal attitude toward the educational enterprise. As recently as the 19th century the study of vernacular language was despised as a school activity. A truly "academic" preparation necessitated the study of classic languages. As you know, by 1910 that tradition had declined sufficiently

so that there seemed a justification for the formation of the National Council.

In McDavids' monograph Betty Gawthrop writes of the very early years of the Council:

> "Practice in using correct grammar was secured through both written and oral composition. And oral composition introduced another problem which vexed many members of the NCTE - that of securing correct pronounciation, clear articulation, and "well-placed voice." British Received Pronounciation was considered the approved standard, and many pages of early issues of the English Journal were given over to discussion of mean of achieving this ideal."

Very quickly though the Council responded to a growing science of linguistics and moved in the direction of linguistic liberalism. Extremely important in this regard was W. Wilber Hatfield's An Experience Curriculum, 1935, which was for the time, revolutionary in its insistence on "functional grammar" and enunciated this now familiar definition -

> "Good English is that form of speech which is appropriate to the speaker, true to the language as it is, and comfortable to speaker and listener. It is the product of custom, neither cramped by rule nor freed from all restraint; it is never fixed, but changes with the organic life of language."

The National Council has never had any desire or pretense of becoming an arbiter of the rightness or wrongness of usage. In 1934 Tressler, whose school text many of us have used, commented:"Most linguistic experts believe that the language is safe on the tongues of men...Although popular changes tend to break down nice distinctions, these changes keep the language simple, vigorous, vivid, alive."

Thus, almost from its inception, certainly in the 1930's and 1940's the position of the NCTE toward language teaching has been a liberal one - favoring what one might call a tolerant "melting pot" approach informed by the work of descriptive linguistics. During this period the Council published S.A. Leonard's Current English Usage (1932) and helped finance C.C. Fries American English Grammar (1940). It is worth noting that then, as now,this official position has not always been understood by its member teachers. In 1952 Robert Pooley made a plea for a better transmission of the facts of language to teachers which, with the possible exception of the textbook reference,seems very apt today.

> "For three or more decades the National Council of Teachers of English has encouraged, sponsored, and financed important researches in grammar. We know by objective investigation what grammar will do and what it will not do...But these facts, all available in print, many of them for a decade or more, are not known generally by teachers of English; they are unknown or ignored by many who train teachers, and they are deliberately avoided by those who publish textbooks...No story is more exciting than the successful battle of the National Council of Teachers of English to liberalize the teaching of English usage...We have secured, at length, a partial acceptance of the truths about language which every linguist takes for granted. But the battle is not yet won."

The move on the part of the Council toward a recognition of cultural pluralism has been more recent. The 1960's saw increasing national debate about educational opportunity. Liberal critics argued that educational opportunity consists not only of equal access to schooling, but most importantly of equal benefits. As Tomas Arteneega points out -

"In the former, emphasis is placed on imputs into the school system. Proponents of this view believe there is equal access to school for those who wish it and that all schools are roughly equal regarding quality of staff, instructional materials, etc. The weaknesses inherent in this view are its oversimplification of the complex problem of achieving equality, and its conservative bias in blaming the victim for his or her failure rather than an institutional structure which has not changed to fit the needs of its heterogeneous target population. The latter view, that of equal benefits, focuses on the distribution of the beneifts derived from the system. Equality of opportunity might be said to exist only if there is an equal benefits situation and not merely equal access."

Proponents of the necessity for an accomodation by schools of cultural differences cite revealing statistics. A New York Times article of 1976 reveals that the drop out rate for American Indians in Chicago public schools is 95%; in the bilingual/bicultural Little Big Horn School (Chicago) the drop out rate was 11%. In twenty four New York City Public Schools having fifty percent or more Puerto Rican enrollemnt eighty-six percent of the eighth-grade students have reading scores below grade level.

In response to this kind of social and educational inequality the Conference on College Composition and Communication passed a policy statement entitled "The Students' Right to Their Own Language." Its supporters maintained:

"Linguistic snobbery was tacitly encouraged by slavish reliance on rules, and these attitudes had consequences far beyond the realm of language. People from different language and ethnic backgrounds were denied social privileges, legal rights and economic opportunity, and their inability to manipulate the dialect used by the privileged group was used as an excuse for this denial."

In commenting upon the CCCC resolution Lawrence D. Freeman argues that "the First, Ninth, and Fourteenth Amendments of the Federal Constitution appear to offer substantial bases for the claimed right, and Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (as amended) in clarifying portions of the Fourteenth Amendment provides yet other bases for the right and policies advocated by the resolution." And he goes on to cite numerous court cases in which the students' linguistic rights have been upheld.

From the point of view of bilingual education, the landmark decision of the Supreme Court in the area of language education is the 1974 case of Lau vs. Nichols. This case, which occupies a position of similar importance to the mainstreaming mandate of Public Law 94-142 in the field of special education, was brought by the Chinese community as represented by Lau against the San Francisco Unified School District, and holds that Chinese speaking children are discriminated against when taught English, a language they do not understand. Before the court was the issue of whether non-English speaking students receive an education free from unlawful discrimination when instructed in English. The Supreme Court ruled that federally aided school districts must address the needs of their non-English speaking students, but did not specify how this was to be done.

The decision has been significant in raising the nation's consciousness about the existance of large numbers of limited English speaking students who have been effectively barred from mainstream education.

Since Lau, several states including Massachusetts, New Jersey and Illinois have passed legislation mandating bilingual education. In addition, Arizona, California, Delaware, Illinois, Indiana, Massachusetts, Michigan, New Jersey, New Mexico, Rhode Isalnd and Texas offer a State Certificate for bilingual teachers. In New York State a Bilingual/TESOL certification program will probably be in place by 1980.

Thus, federally inspired bilingual/bicultural mandates prompt state certification requirements which will introduce linguistically trained and sensitive personnel into the nations schools in increasingly large numbers. Considering its own responsibility to such programs and the children they serve, the profession of English Education should continue to emphasize the role of applied linguistics in pre-service and in-service training programs.

The social reality of American classrooms indicates that many English teachers are or should be teachers of English as second language/dialect. All English teachers could profit from a greater understanding and appreciation for TESOL strategies. Obviously, time today does not permit a thorough analysis of the applicability of such TESOL methodology, but I should like to sketch out a few general areas that I see as pertinent.

The exigencies of the TESOL task seem to require that the teacher look to grammar for pedogogical utility rather than theoretical elegance. This fosters a healthy, eclectic approach to grammar teaching, although the most persistent reliance in TESOL seems to be on structural linguistics. Because of the operational definition for grammatical terms that the structuralists provide - because of this grammar's productive distinction between form and function in language, and also, because descriptive linguistics lends itself to inductive teaching, I see this emphasis as one the standard English teacher could happily borrow.

Reading teachers might profit from the ESL teachers' insights into the role of syntax in comprehension. Again, it seems important to underline that it is the perspective afforded by the ESL teacher that can illuminate standard English teaching practice rather than any one particular technique.

"Controlled composition", sometimes called "guided composition", for instance, is described in Christina Bratt Paulston's article "Teaching Writing in the ESOL Classroom," in March, 1972, issue of the TESOL Quarterly is a methodology that seems highly dependent on the structurist formulation of writing as a special dialect of language. The technique, which basically embodies drill exercises that require students to fill in frames or slots, is one that all English teachers should be familiar with - and indeed many are. In some situations and for many instructors it may not be a desirable activity. My point is simply that as bilingual education grows and introduces greater numbers of teachers with TESOL credentials into the public schools, a healthy cross-fertilization of ideas and techniques among TESOL and English educators can take place.

Most importantly, perhaps, is the attitudinal change that growing emphasis on bilingual/bicultural education should bring. Basil Bernstein has said, "If the culture of the teacher is to become part of the conciousness of the child, then the culture of the child must first be in the conciousness of the teacher." What he advocates is not a narrow stereotyped vision, but rather that the teacher become an ethnographer of the social meaning of language in his/her own classroom. Sociolinguistics should be a required course for all prospective English teachers, as it is now a required component of bilingual or TESOL programs.

In how many English or reading classes throughout the nation are all youngsters, dialect and non-dialect speakers alike, limited to a sterile instructional emphasis on traditional, normative language structures? How frequently do teachers misinterpret minority students behavior because of contrasting cultural interactional rules: use of body space, eye contact, voice level?

In Cazden's Functions of Language in the Classroom, there are reports of an observation of a first grade reading class. With the lowest group - made up of minority children, the teacher used most of the instructional time in an attempt to

correct a dialectical difference. She was interested in having the children distinguish the vowel phonemes in "pin" and "pen" - a contrast not present in their dialect. With the superior reading group, instructional time was devoted to an exploration of the meaning of the story.

A few years ago observing in an English classroom in a northern city with a large Black population, I listened while a young Black man worked his way through his grammar lesson with the help of an aide who was also a dialect speaker. The exercises called for the insertion of the proper prepositions in a series of sentences. When the interplay between the young man and his tutor caught my attention, the phrase within a sentence that was proving difficult was "the melancholy air _____ the rose garden." The insertion required obviously was "of". Now I would submit to you that such a phrase is seldom in anyone's spoken dialect, but rather represents a fairly artificial variety of written prose. The young man, who as a native speaker, is certainly as aware as any of us about how to use that particular preposition, struggled with the sentence for several minutes. The aide was sympathetic but adamant that he figure it out himself. Her faith in the beneficial effects of the exercise was touching. The young man looked up both "melancholy" and "air" in his dictionary without any particular enlightenment. Finally, prompted by the aide he made a correct guess and proceeded on to do battle with the next sentence. How profitable is such a learning experience? What is the cummulative effect of a succession of them?

In a recent analysis Learning from Teaching: A Developmental Perspective the authors Brophy and Everston include discussion on the personal characteristics of high success vs low success teachers. The high success teachers had "can do" attitudes and accepted personal responsibility for the outcomes of instruction. They

carried out differential instructions to meet individual needs while the resigned "nothing I can do" attitude of the low success teachers manifested itself, at least in part, in their direction of instruction toward what they conceived to be the middle range.

The impact of bilingual/bicultural instruction on English education hopefully will be a lessoning of such low success, undifferentiated teaching. Like mainstreaming, the demand for accomodation of cultural pluralism in the classroom should result in training practices and attitudinal growth that will produce, more consistently, the kind of positive individualization in school practice that will profit all the nation's children.